

Board of Selectmen

Easton is governed by the Town Meeting (which is the Town's legislative body), the Board of Selectmen (its executive and administrative body), and the Board of Finance (its financial body). The Easton Board of Education is responsible for Town schools and the Regional Board of Education is responsible for Joel Barlow High School. These two boards of education share a central office staff with the Redding Board of Education.

The Town is administered through a three-member Board of Selectmen with the First Selectman being the chief executive officer of the Town. The Selectmen serve for two-year terms which commence immediately following the election in odd numbered years. No more than two Selectmen can be from the same political party. The Selectmen hold regular meetings on the first and third Thursdays of each month at 7:30 p.m., usually in the Town Hall conference room. Special meetings are held as required. Citizens are encouraged to attend meetings and time for public comment is allowed.

A number of able boards, commissions, committees, volunteers, and employees assist in the Town's operations. The reports of those entities are contained in this annual report and your attention is directed to them. Without the dedication of each of the individuals involved, Easton would suffer. With their dedication, Easton excels as a great place to live.

During this past year, Easton continued work on its school facilities. The new Samuel Staples Elementary School was brought into service in 2005. The design of the new school conforms well with the rural ambiance of the Town. A determination was made to complete the work necessary to air condition the facility. The School Building Committee 2001 is attending to the closeout details and we expect the project to be concluded shortly.

We also expect the final item on the renovation and expansion of the Helen Keller Middle School to be completed and the project should be closed out shortly.

The southerly wing of the former Samuel Staples Elementary School has been leased to a private school, Phoenix Academy. Phoenix has been conducting classes in that wing of the building and will continue to do so for at least the next year.

A Senior Center Building Committee has been appointed and is working on plans to move the Senior Center up to a portion of the northerly wing of the school. A grant in the amount of \$500,000.00 has been obtained from the State and a block grant in the amount of \$750,000.00 based on federal funding has also been obtained. Other grants are being sought. Once the Senior Center is out of its space on the lower level, a Town agency, possibly Parks and Recreation, will locate its offices in that area. Other portions of the northerly wing and eventually the southerly wing, when Phoenix Academy vacates, will be used for Town purposes. At present, some of the areas are used for storage. The Central Offices of the Easton/Redding Boards of Education will be moving into a portion of the northerly wing effective July 1, 2007.

The Tax Relief for the Elderly Ordinance remained in effect for the 2006 assessment year. The existing ordinance is one of the most beneficial to seniors in the entire State. Nevertheless, in accordance with the ordinance, a Tax Relief for the Elderly Committee will be formed in 2007 to review the ordinance again.

Contracts with each of the unions representing Town employees have been settled with the exception of those for the Police and Fire Departments. We expect to shortly resolve the Police and Fire contracts as well. The Human Resources Advisory Committee continues to review individual positions and non-represented positions for recommendations to the Board of Finance.

As of the recent State purchase of land formerly owned by Aquarion, protected land in Easton is now in excess of 40% of the Town making us a unique municipal jewel in Fairfield County. A trail running from Rock House Road and connecting to the trail system in Huntington State Park in Redding, Connecticut, will shortly be opened. Other trails on protected property receive significant use.

The proposal for an affordable housing development on South Park Avenue has been denied, both by the Conservation Commission and the Planning and Zoning Commission. The developer has appealed those decisions and the appeal is still pending. There is, however, a possibility that the appeal will be withdrawn and that the property will be conveyed to a tax exempt organization in which the prior owners of the property have an interest. That transfer has not yet been finalized and details of any proposed development of the property have not been made public.

A large parcel of land located on the northwest corner of Route 136 and Sport Hill Road faces the possibility of development. The owner has proposed to the Department of Environmental Protection, a septic system to serve an intensified age-restricted development. The DEP has not yet made a decision as to the septic application, but the Department of Health has reviewed the plans and is opposed to the project. In the meantime, the owner of the parcel has provided an option to a Fairfield church to locate a large church facility on the property. That option has not been exercised at the present time. Thus, development of the parcel is still uncertain.

The joint application of United Illuminating/Northeast Utilities for an expansion of its transmission lines from Middletown to Norwalk is in the process of construction and continuing review by the Connecticut Siting Council. The proposed route does not impact the Town of Easton.

Although several Indian tribes have sought recognition with a desire to build a casino in the Greater Bridgeport area, thus far the necessary recognition has not been granted to any of the tribal units. The Town will continue to watch the situation closely.

The Town must continue to be aware of the challenges to the maintenance of its rural character. Easton is a unique Town in Fairfield County, and we must work to preserve that unique character.

In addition to these issues, the Board of Selectmen continues to oversee the day to day operations of the Town. Citizens are encouraged to contact the First Selectman's Office with any questions or suggestions they may have.

The Board of Selectmen thanks the many citizens who have contributed their time and expertise to the Town by serving on its boards, commissions, and committees. We also thank all of you for helping to continue to enhance Easton's special qualities.

The Board of Selectmen

William J. Kupinse, Jr., First Selectman

Robert H. Lessler, Selectman

Scott S. Centrella, Selectman